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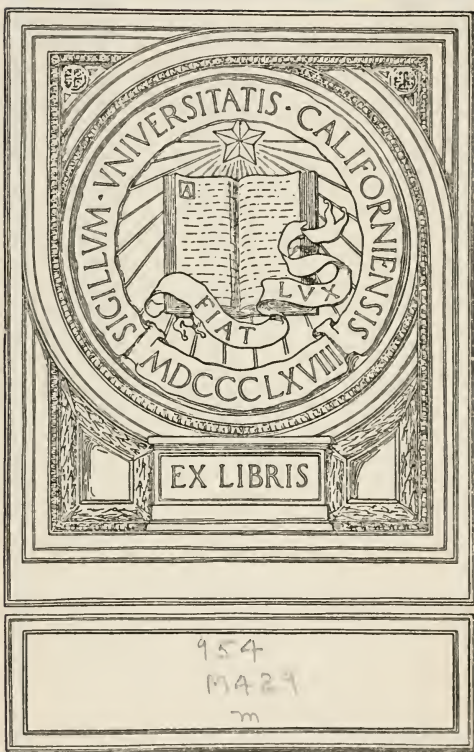
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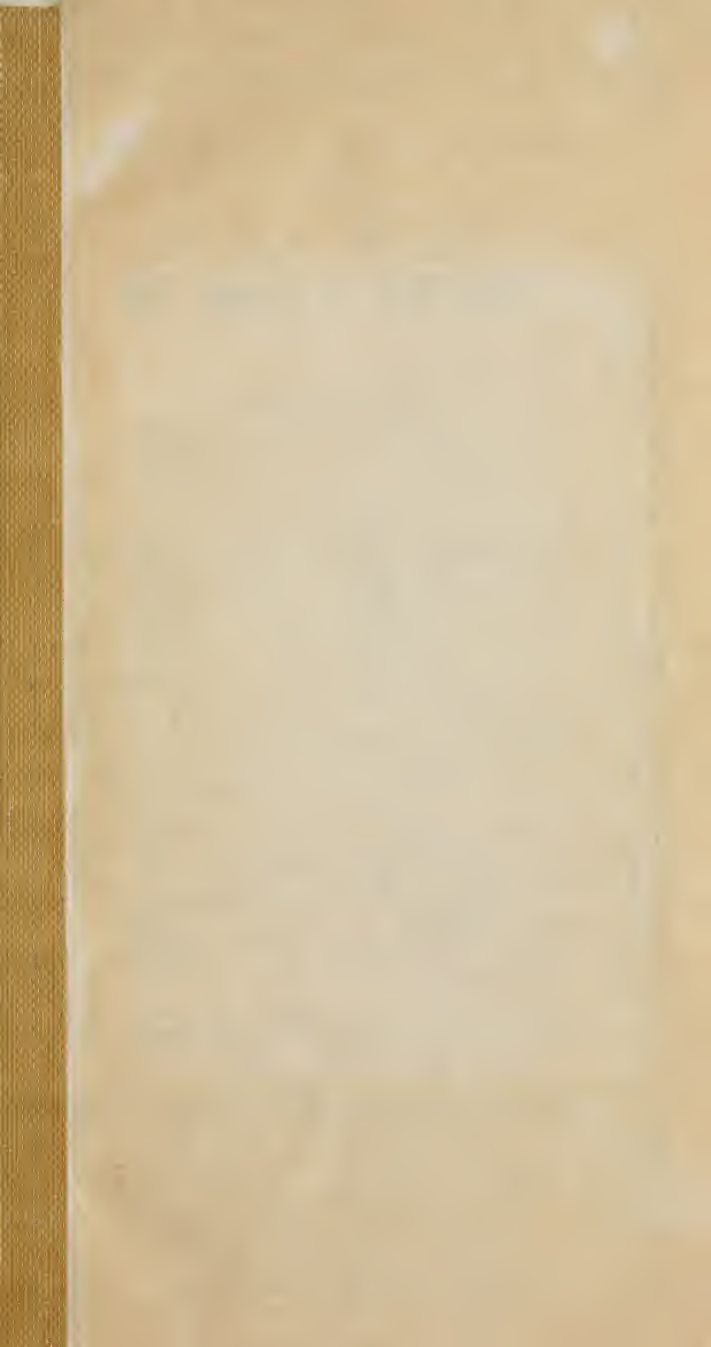
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FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

late LAURENCE.

Norace Porter,
MY WIFE'S MOTHER.

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SAMUEL FRENCH,
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A COMIC DRAMA

IN TWO ACTS

BY

CHARLES MATHEWS,

||

AUTHOR OF

The Dowager. Little Toddlekins. Patter v. Clatter. He would be an Actor. The Ringdoves, Humpback'd Lover. A Match for a King. Two in the Morning. Truth, etc. etc.

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122, NASSAU STREET.

MY WIFE'S MOTHER.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, on Wednesday,
July 3, 1833.*

UNCLE FOOZLE	-	-	Mr. FARREN.
FELIX BUD	-	-	Mr. VINING.
EDWARD WAVERLY			Mr. BRINDALL.
THOMAS	-	-	Mr. EATON.
MRS. QUICKFIDGET	.		Mrs. GLOVER.
MRS. ELLEN BUD	.		Miss TAYLOR.
MRS. FITZOSBORNE	.		Mrs. HONEY.

Cook and Housemaid.

Time: 1st Act, thirty one minutes; 2d. thirty three minutes.

UNCLE FOOZLE.—Large blue coat, with bright buttons, long white waistcoat, drab cloth breeches and gaiters, white cravat, bald crown and white hair.

Rest of the characters fashionable dresses of the day.

MY WIFE'S MOTHER.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Chamber.—Carpet down—elegant Furniture.
—fire place L. Table with Breakfast L. C.*

FELIX BUD *in dressing gown and slippers discovered at
breakfast L. H. of table.* EDWARD WAVERLY *seated R. H.
of table*

BUD. My dear Ned, I'm the happiest of men! You must see I am yourself; how comfortable everything is about me. Arm chair, dressing gown, and slippers—well ordered breakfast table, good fire, clean room—everything cheerful and smiling. There's nothing like a wife for managing these matters, and I flatter myself there are not many like my Ellen. Ah, you bachelors are wretched dogs.

WAV. Well, well, Felix, we won't dispute the point—you are happy, and so am I. I always had a dread of matrimony, I own. I must confess, though, there is something about your rosy looks that tempts me almost to alter my tone. But, no, I don't yield yet. Recollect, you've scarcely been married a month, my boy, and who knows what tempests may break over your head, now, before the honeymoon is well over; look out for squalls, Felix, they are certain to come.

BUD. Not to be frightened, Ned, I'm a family man, and I laugh at your predictions.

WAV. Well, well—I'm only joking. I assure you I have had an itching for matrimony more than once myself; but then the chances of happiness are so confoundedly against one.

BUD. Ay, but when you do get a prize, it is worth the

risk. Look at me and my darling of a wife; we love each other more and more every day.

WAV. For the first month. Ha! ha! ha!

BUD. Well, laugh and envy. But I must tell you of a charming surprise we've had; you must know that the day after our marriage, my wife's mother, Mrs. Quickfidget, was obliged to hurry down to Liverpool on account of the serious illness and expected death of a rich old bachelor cousin of hers, who couldn't die comfortably but in her arms. His unexpected restoration to health, however, has hastened my mother-in-law's return, and last night, without an hour's intimation, dear Mrs. Quickfidget arrived here. I can't tell you what a delightful meeting it was; we were all three locked in each other's arms for an hour; first we laughed, and then we cried, and then we almost danced for joy; we only wanted her presence to complete our circle; and to our great delight she has consented to take up her residence with us always.

WAV. Well, come, that will make it monstrous pleasant.

BUD. Ah! What, I told you so, eh? From this moment I defy you and all the world to disturb my bliss.

WAV. Upon my soul, Felix, I must say you are a lucky dog; and I declare I begin to feel the strongest temptation to—but then children! I hate children squalling about one in brown holland pinafores; besides the fear of how they may turn out. Boys, perhaps, that won't work, or girls that can't. Ah! No, it wouldn't do for me.

BUD. Nonsense. I contend it's generally a man's own fault if he is not happy. Here I shall have my wife's mother, a sweet, amiable companion, always by her side to aid her with her advice; then havn't I my own uncle, Mr. Foozle, established among us—a part of ourselves, fond of quiet, and doing to-day precisely what he did yesterday; no bickerings, no disputes.

WAV. Rather too apathetic though for me. His whole existence seems to be a long habit—either laughing or sleeping—runs from one extreme to the other.

BUD. So much the better, poor old gentleman; my uncle, Foozle, enjoys a renewed freedom now, thanks to the considerate death of his tender half—and preserves,

unruffled, that imperturbable good humour, which not even her cross-grained disposition could destroy; then there's my Nelly's old schoolfellow, Mrs. Fitzosborne, the gay young widow who is come to live close by us. By-the-bye, Ned, I suspect she has begun to make an impression on you already.

WAV. On me! No no. I'll confess I have sometimes given her a thought, and if I really could bring myself to believe that what you say of a wedded life was true—but, no, it's of no use—I'm firm to my text, I'm a staunch bachelor, Felix.

BUD. Pooh! I tell you Mrs. Fitzosborne is the very woman for you. So gay and lively, sings divinely, and paints beautifully. Apropos—this is my wife's birthday, and I have prepared a little surprise for her. I expect her here every moment with a miniature she has made of me, and with which I intend surprising my wife this evening.

WAV. Lord! It's a pretty idea! And have you let your mother-in-law, Mrs. Quickfidget, into the secret?

BUD. I haven't breathed a word of it—for among the many virtues which my wife assures me her mother possesses, I don't recollect her power of keeping a secret, and that is indispensable for the present.

WAV. But do you think it possible she can forget that this is her daughter's birthday?

BUD. Oh, she would have mentioned it, you know. However I shall see her directly, and then—but here's somebody coming. Oh, it's my wife herself.

Enter ELLEN, R. H.

ELLEN. Ah! Mr. Waverly, I am rejoiced to see you.

WAV. Your most obedient, madam.

ELLEN. I am afraid I have interrupted your colloquy; what were you treating of?

BUD. Nothing, dear—nothing at all.

ELLEN. (*crosses c.*) So, Mr. Felix, a secret from your wife already!

BUD. I, my dear Nelly! You know I never can have.

WAV. (*aside.*) Conjugal fib number one.

ELLEN. I believe you, love.

WAV. (*aside.*) They all do at first.

ELLEN. Well, Mr. Waverly, have you heard of our good fortune? My Mother is arrived—never again to leave us.

WAV. I'm quite impatient to make her acquaintance.

ELLEN. The dear soul is not up yet, so tired with her journey, poor thing. How happy I am to be sure. Now shall you not love her, Felix?

BUD. I shall doat upon her; can I do otherwise, were it only in gratitude for her granting me your hand!

ELLEN. Dear Felix!

WAV. (*aside.*) Sweet turtles! Gad, it must be very pleasant, though!

ELLEN. Oh, how you delight me! But I was sure you would act so; what a charming perspective is opened to me! First of all no bickerings—no altercations; peace and love shall reign undisturbed—we shall each have our separate daily occupations. While Felix attends to his affairs I shall be busy with my domestic duties; on winter evenings we shall assemble round a good fire, sometimes reading an interesting book, at others, chatting together, and sometimes, to please mamma and uncle Foozle, joining in a friendly game at whist. In the spring we shall vary our pleasures by a tour in the country, when among the romantic walks and drives which it offers—and in the company of a few sincere friends, you, Mr. Waverly amongst the number, we shall lay in a fresh stock of good humour, and give new zest to our happiness.

BUD. Ned, what do you say now?

WAV. Why I protest you will revive the golden age, and I sincerely hope your pleasant imaginings may be realised.

ELLEN. I doubt not but they will; and when you know mamma, you will love her as we do: she takes a lively interest in everything around her, and will neglect nothing that can add to the comfort and good order of our establishment.

BUD. Take my advice, Ned; get married, I tell you.

WAV. I declare I almost think I shall: it must be monstrous pleasant.—But here comes Mr. Foozle; what says he to the new arrangement?

Enter MR. FOOZLE, L. H. FELIX and ELLEN each seize him by a hand, and drag him forward.

BUD. Uncle, uncle, come along—you are the very man we want.

ELLEN. Dear uncle Foozle, give us joy.

FOOZLE. Gently — gently, you rogues—but where's mamma? It was past nine o'clock last night when she arrived, and I was in bed. I long to see her; but lord, where's the hurry? Not up yet, I suppose?

ELLEN. She'll not be long.

FOOZLE. Never mind, I shall see her by-and-bye: there's no hurry, I tell you—I can wait. Well, Felix, my boy, and my pretty Nell, all hoity-toity, eh?

ELLEN. Indeed are we.

FOOZLE. Lord, how natural that is now; why even I am not discontented, and that's great excitement for me, you know. I am easily pleased, thank Heaven for it; I'm of a peaceful temper. As long as I'm allowed to go to bed at my regular hour, that I'm not hindered from my morning saunter, and that I get my three tranquil meals a day, without annoyance or trouble, I am content with all that happens.

WAV. Ay, Mr. Foozle, Heaven has blessed you with a happy disposition; and, if report speaks truly, it has been put to the proof, more than once, by the late Mrs. F.

FOOZLE. Why, to say the truth, my wife hadn't the best temper in the world. What a life she led me—always riot and turmoil; but what did it matter? One gets accustomed to all these things: at first, the trial was a little severe; but, long before she died, I had become quite reconciled to it. Habit is everything; and, for the want of her bustle and noise, I sometimes feel a sort of void: for you must know, when she began to storm, (which was regularly the case every day,) I gradually stretched myself in my arm-chair, never answered a word to check her bitter discourse, and always ended by dropping asleep, lulled by the melody of her soothing voice—daily custom.

WAV. And was your patience so perfect that it never abandoned you?

FOOZLE. Never! why should it? What did it matter? Besides, what should I have gained by putting myself in a passion? Nothing! I let her scold and scream, because I liked peace and quietness—that's my nature: my wife liked strife and contention—that was hers. And as I felt that nothing could make me change my disposition, I pardoned her for being equally confirmed in hers.

(goes up to table.)

WAV. Gad, I believe I shall remain as I am.

ELLEN. Oh, here is mamma. *(crossing to L.)*

Enter MRS. QUICKFIDGET, L. H.

MRS. Q. Come to my arms once more, my darling child! I'm afraid I'm up rather late, is it not so? Well, you must excuse me; but you know, my dear, the fatigue of last night delayed, for a few moments, the delight of embracing you.

BUD. I hope your room was to your liking?

MRS. Q. All perfection, dear children. *(crosses c.)* How could it be otherwise? To see—to live with you will scatter roses in my path for the rest of my days.

BUD. On our parts nothing shall be wanting, I assure you.

WAV. *(aside.)* Very proper and pleasing. This speaks excessively well for the sort of thing, I must own.

MRS. Q. Dear Mr. Bud, I know it. I know your heart; it broke mine to leave you as I did, so soon after your marriage; but my Cousin Weasel's fortunate restoration to health has hastened my return. How I have suffered in absence. Everything, too, in and about his house tormented me, and it was in vain that I attempted to establish anything in the shape of order there. I should have begun by taking the reins into my own hands; and, as the first stage towards the re-establishment of good order in the house, I should have turned out every soul that was in it.

WAV. *(aside.)* A nice beginning.—I see I musn't be too precipitate,

FOOZLE. *(aside.)* When I hear her talk, I could almost

fancy it the voice of my termagant wife, the late lamented Mrs. F.

MRS. Q. Oh yes, my heart thrills at finding myself once more among you.

WAV. Allow me, madam, the honour, as a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Bud, of presenting my devoirs.

MRS. Q. Mr. Edward Waverly, I believe. I am delighted, sir, to make your acquaintance. (*crosses and shakes hands with him.*) Your good qualities are already known to me. (*aside.*) Seems to be a good, stupid, straightforward man enough.

FOOZLE. (*aside—comes down L.*) I suppose I must tickle up a compliment, too.—And I, madam, am quite ravished with pleasure to—

MRS. Q. Mr. Foozle, you are my son-in-law's uncle, I believe?

FOOZLE. Exactly so, madam. (*aside.*) She has saved me the trouble of proceeding.

MRS. Q. A resident in our house, if I mistake not?

FOOZLE. As you say, madam, a peaceful inhabitant.

(*goes up and sits—reads paper.*)

MRS. Q. What a dear old man!

BUD. I was sure you must like him.

ELLEN. Oh yes, he's so harmless.

MRS. Q. He looks so, my dear. (*aside.*) He seems a sly, insidious, crafty intriguer.

THOMAS enters L. H.—announces “Mrs. Fitzosborne.”
[Exit THOMAS, L. H.]

Enter MRS. FITZOSBORNE.

MRS. F. Welcome, a thousand times, my dear madam. I never dreamt of your returning so soon—how could I? My dear Ellen, I rejoice with you—Felix, I congratulate you.

MRS. Q. (*starting.*) Felix! I am flattered, madam, by your joy. (*aside.*) She called him Felix.

MRS. F. Oh, as for me, I'm truly glad, for you must allow me to tell you that I am prepared to love you as much as Ellen herself. Our friendship began at school,

and it is still so sincere, that our griefs and our pleasures are always shared.

ELLEN. Yes, indeed, our hearts are united as closely as ever.

MRS. Q. (*aside.*) I don't much like this overstrained friendship. I can see, with half an eye, that this gay widow is a chattering coquette.

WAV. Will not Mrs. Fitzosborne grant me a single look this morning?

MRS. F. Bless me, Mr. Waverly! Why I declare you are growing quite tender and sentimental!

WAV. The scene of happiness, I have before my eyes, makes me feel my isolated state; will not Mrs. Fitzosborne take pity on me?

MRS. F. Pshaw, Mr. Waverly! how can you talk such nonsense! I vow, I don't know what you mean! Oh, Ellen, I wish you had been with me at the concert yesterday. It was divine—crowded to suffocation—exquisite singing—and full of fashion. — Oh, by-the-bye, you promised to accompany me on a shopping excursion this morning.

ELLEN. Yes; but now, of course, that will be impossible.

MRS. Q. Why so? Now, pray why, my dear? If I am to fetter your motions, I shall leave you at once—I must not be considered for a moment.

BUD. (*to* WAVERLY.) Dear, amiable, considerate creature!

WAV. (*aside.*) Um! I don't know.

ELLEN. Oh, no, positively—I will at least to-day give you my company.

BUD. (*aside.*) What an unlucky accident, and I want to get her out so, to prepare for our fête.

MRS. F. We should not be detained half an hour.

MRS. Q. Come, Nelly, now I insist upon it.

ELLEN. Well then, my dear mamma, I obey; but more on Felix's account than my own.

BUD. Why on mine, my dear?

ELLEN. Because I know you are dying to see me in Madame la Blonde's new bonnet—It's such a love.

BUD. Oh, don't hurry on my account.

MRS. F. (*whispers to BUD.*) I'll keep her two hours, at least.

BUD. (*aside.*) But where's the miniature?

MRS. Q. (*aside.*) Whispering, as I live!

MRS. F. Quite finished—I shall send it you directly. Come, Ellen—Mr. Waverly, try and console yourself till we return.

WAV. I will do my best. (*aside.*) There'll be no difficulty.—I won't have her.

ELLEN. Good bye, then, mamma; I shall soon return.
(*ad lib.*)

[*Exeunt* MRS. FITZOSBORNE and ELLEN, L. H.]

MRS. Q. Now, gentlemen, mind I will have no compliments; act as you would if I were not here. I don't mind being left alone; so, if you have business, pray don't think of neglecting it on my account.

BUD. I will profit by your kind permission, if you will excuse me, while I give a few orders.

WAV. I also will take my leave, with the hope of being allowed soon to pay my respects again.

BUD. (*as they are going.*) Well, Mr. Ned, what say you? Take my advice, and propose to the young widow at once.

WAV. Egad! I felt a strong temptation just now—we'll talk of it as we go along.

[*Exeunt* BUD and WAVERLY, R. H.]

FOOZLE. (*gets up—stretches—take out his watch, L. H.*) Near twelve o'clock! I must go and take my morning walk. If I were to miss a day, I verily believe I should fall ill. My hour is come, so, madam, I wish you a good morning.

MRS. Q. I must try and worm something out of this old fellow.—Mr. Foozle, give me your company for a moment, I wish to say a word to you.

FOOZLE. You couldn't wait a couple of hours, and say it after my walk?

MRS. Q. Oh, it can't matter that you defer your stroll for a moment or two.

FOOZLE. Oh, but it does matter, though; use, you know, is second nature.

MRS. Q. To be sure, every one has his peculiar habits and temperaments; for instance, there is nothing disturbs

me so much as being contradicted. What sort of a life do you pass here?

FOOZLE. I—delightful. I eat, drink, sleep, and walk about; that's all I ask, and I have it all; my nephew is goodness itself—and your daughter is an angel.

MRS. Q. That Mrs. Fitzosborne—does she come here often?

FOOZLE. Almost every day.

MRS. Q. Ay! Indeed! What object can she have for such regular attendance?

FOOZLE. Object! (*aside.*) She calls this one word! Good bye to my walk. Why, are we not friends? She comes to ask us how we do.

MRS. Q. Um! And our young couple—do they seem to agree since their marriage?

FOOZLE. Agree! bless my soul! Perfectly! What should hinder them? Don't they love each other?

MRS. Q. Yes, but I am Nelly's mother, and as such have a right to know all. Tell me now, this young widow, who comes here so constantly, is there no little secret intelligence between her and Mr. Bud? You must know it. Come, let us have a little quiet chat together.

FOOZLE. Stop! Shall you be long?

MRS. Q. I don't know, perhaps I may.

FOOZLE. Then you will allow me to take a seat. I get tired of listening if I stand. Suppose you sit down too.
(*draws himself a large arm chair.*)

MRS. Q. What an original it is. No, I prefer standing.

FOOZLE. Now out with it.

MRS. Q. Pray then, Mr. Foozle, have you ever, at any time, reflected on the unpleasant consequences which might one day or other result from the inconsiderate presence and sojourn of a third person, even though a relation, in the family of a new married couple?

FOOZLE. Never, madam.

MRS. Q. Has it never occurred to you, that such a guest might annoy, or become unwelcome?

FOOZLE. I can't say it ever has. (*aside.*) What is she driving at?

MRS. Q. And yet, there are situations in all families in which such an eternal intruder cannot but be disagreeable.

FOOZLE. Oh, but believe me you are wrong. I know

your children better than you do. I know how happy they are to have you with them. I must insist on your remaining.

MRS. Q. Why this is perfect! And so you think I am alluding to myself?

FOOZLE. Why, of course I do. Who else should you allude to?

MRS. Q. I speak of you, Mr. Foozle. It is your interest I have at heart.

FOOZLE. Me! I'm very much obliged to you.

MRS. Q. Am I not a mother? Am I not my daughter's best, surest, nay, only guide? Can she do without me? Our situations are widely different.

FOOZLE. One word, Mrs. Quickfidget, although I am thoroughly aware that I am only an uncle—I say with this full knowledge before my eyes—here I remain, I don't stir one jot. I love my nephew dearly, he returns my affection, and my niece appears to be an excellent young person. You are come to increase the number of our family, so much the better, the more the merrier, and so let us live together in harmony; if strife and altercation be requisite, you must undertake it—as I used to say to the late lamented Mrs. F. I wash my hands of that part of the business; why should you wish to send me, at my time of life, into solitude? Do I complain of your arrival? Not a bit. What does it matter to me? Stop, and welcome, and let us all be jolly.

MRS. Q. And you determine on remaining?

FOOZLE. Poz!

MRS. Q. And you don't perceive that your presence may have become irksome to my daughter and her husband.

FOOZLE. No, I can't say I do. And besides, if it did I am sure they would tell me so.

MRS. Q. Tell you so, indeed! It is one of those things one can't positively tell a man.

FOOZLE. And yet you tell it me!

MRS. Q. Oh, I speak for your good.

FOOZLE. Thank you—you are really much too kind.

MRS. Q. Mr. Foozle, this is a tone I am not accustomed to! I hope it is not your intention to insult and irritate me.

FOOZLE. I! Lord bless your heart, such a thing never entered my head; don't get angry, for mercy's sake; you'll only make yourself ill, and what does it matter?

(yawns.)

MRS. Q. Well, sir, since you don't choose to take a gentle, friendly hint, and willingly retire, I must take upon myself the task of dislodging you. (FOOZLE *gradually falls asleep.*) Over my daughter, at any rate, Mr. Foozle, I have some power, and I will soon let her and her husband know that this is no place for you. For the last time, then, most amiable Mr. Foozle, have the kindness to inform me whether you accept my proposal? *(aside.)* He seems to be awed into silence at any rate. Why, can I believe my senses! His eyes are shut. He's fast asleep I declare. This is an affront I did not expect. *(very loud.)* Mr. Foozle!

FOOZLE. *(waking.)* Holloa! what's the matter? Has anything happened? Oh, I beg pardon, madam; but lord, how you frightened me! I declare I thought it was my late lamented wife, Mrs. F.—I fancied she was scolding me according to custom, ha! ha! ha! See what a thing habit is: I never can hear anybody arguing loudly or quarelling, but I fall fast asleep.

MRS. Q. This is too much to be borne. It's an unpardonable insult! Fall asleep, indeed, while I am talking! Allow me to tell you, Mr. Foozle—*(loudly.)*

FOOZLE. *(yawns.)* I shall go off again.

MRS. Q. You shall pay dearly for this.

FOOZLE. What is it I have done? Come let me hear.

Enter WAVERLY, R. H.

WAV. What can have happened? I thought you were disputing.

MRS. Q. Disputing, indeed! This gentleman has insulted me in the grossest manner.

FOOZLE. Why what are you saying? I'm sure nobody can affront another in his sleep.

MRS. Q. You see he owns it. Not content with irritating words, he has crowned all by affecting a calm indifference, and pretending sleep, in order to evade answering me.

WAV. Oh, Mr. Foozle!

FOOZLE. Mr. Waverly, I give you my word of honour, this is not the fact: there was no pretence about it; I slept in downright earnest.

MRS. Q. There, you see, he confesses it himself.

FOOZLE. How could I help it, if your discourse produced the effect of a narcotic upon me.

(WAVERLY goes up.)

MRS. Q. Enough! I can live under the same roof with you no longer. Mr. Foozle, you understand me—either the uncle or the mother must depart; it is for them to decide.

FOOZLE. Madam, as you seem to be launching imperceptibly into the florid style of declamation, I presume that the *quiet* chat you wished with me is at an end, and, therefore, with your permission, I shall make one more effort to enjoy my placid saunter. Ned, you had better accompany me: you'll find the air cooler out of doors.

[*Exeunt* FOOZLE and WAVERLY, L. H.]

MRS. Q. Ah, hypocritical, phlegmatic, cunning old fox—but it's always the way with uncles. I declare that Mrs. Fitzosborne quite alarms me; I see I must investigate this business; I am convinced there is something more in it than meets the eye.

Enter ELLEN, L. H.

ELLEN. Well, my dear mamma, have I not kept my word?

MRS. Q. Most punctually. And now, my dear child, that we are at last alone, I must have a little quiet chat with you. Tell me, do you still love, and believe yourself beloved by your husband as much as ever? Is your apparently happy situation real or false? Has he no little defects of temper that annoy you? Come tell me everything; and, above all, beware of deceiving me.—A daughter should have no secrets from her mother.

ELLEN. Your tender solicitude cannot be better gratified than by hearing that my happiness is solid and real; my dear Felix is the best of husbands, and I love him sincerely. He is sometimes a little irritable—but what then? He is never so with me, and nothing can destroy our harmony, since I obey him in everything.

MRS. Q. Um—um ! There is such a thing as straining that point too far. But, now, which of you directs the affairs of the house ?

ELLEN. Sometimes he—sometimes I. We are not jealous of the right, but willingly cede it to each other.

MRS. Q. But who regulates the expenses, eh ?

ELLEN. That is my department, but he gives me his advice, and I willingly follow it : when money is wanted, I ask it ; he never refuses, nor do I ever abuse his kindness.

MRS. Q. Your dear father confided to me the entire direction of the family. I kept the keys, scolded the servants—oh, by-the-bye, your servants want looking after sadly.

ELLEN. But they do their duty.

MRS. Q. That's not sufficient, my dear ; they ought to be respectful, obedient, humble, and good-tempered.

ELLEN. But, my dear mamma, what makes you think they are not so ?

MRS. Q. I have my reasons. And that Mrs. Fitzosborne that you think so perfect, and that you love so much—now, between ourselves, isn't she a bit of a coquette ?

ELLEN. Who ?

MRS. Q. Ay, Mrs. Fitzosborne. I must confess to you, my dear, she is not much to my liking. Her dress struck me directly—it was too elegant for the occasion—quite a caricature. I assure you I was on thorns on your account.

ELLEN. Nay, mamma—she is fond of dress. I am sure it is an innocent foible.

MRS. Q. Not so innocent or harmless as you think. I could see your husband gloating on her continually ; they didn't think I was watching them.

ELLEN. Why what can you be thinking of ?

MRS. Q. I don't want to frighten you, my dear, but a mother's eyes are not to be deceived. Take my advice, and be on your guard against that flirt.

ELLEN. Come, come, you judge her too harshly. She is sincerity itself, and never could condescend to coquetry. She loves Felix as the author of my happiness ; and he, seeing our strict friendship, esteems her with a brother's

affection. Thus blessed in love and friendship, can I for a moment give way to an unworthy doubt or fear?

MRS. Q. Since you put me to it—did I not detect them exchanging significant glances, and about what? They've a secret, my dear—a secret between Mrs. Fitzosborne and your husband.

ELLEN. A secret between my Felix and Mrs. Fitzosborne! (*they rise.*)

MRS. Q. I know it I tell you—nay more, I positively saw them whisper together.

ELLEN. But are you quite sure of what you say?
(*a little alarmed.*)

MRS. Q. Certain!

ELLEN. Felix is all candour, and I am sure that the moment I speak to him he will explain away this mystery.

MRS. Q. Why, is the child mad? A pretty way, indeed, you would take to discover secrets. Here comes your husband—leave him to me.

ELLEN. I don't know what to think. I am sure of my Felix's love, and yet I really begin to be quite wretched.

Enter BUD, R. H., gaily.

BUD. Well, mamma, you are the very person I was in search of—and my dear Nelly, too! Eh—what's the matter? I declare you are quite melancholy—bless me! Nelly duck. what is it? (*crosses and offers his hand.*)

ELLEN. I—nothing, sir! I must leave—I'll go to my own room, and have a cry by myself. [*Exit R. H.*]

BUD. "Sir!" What's the meaning of this? Nelly seems out of temper; it's the first time I ever saw her so.

MRS. Q. Little humours, Mr. Bud: the best of us are sometimes subject to them; and, from what I can gather from our short interview, Ellen is a prey to certain uneasinesses.

BUD. Uneasinesses! What can she have to complain of?

MRS. Q. Complain! Such a thing never entered her head; but I can see she is annoyed to find you so anxious to mix yourself up in her little family arrangements; you

know it is entrenching too much on her privileges as a wife.

BUD. Oh, but I can't say I like such ideas at all; particularly, when so far from mixing myself up with her arrangements, she is the first to come and consult me on all occasions.

MRS. Q. But my dear Mr. Bud, you ought only to view these little ebullitions as fresh proofs of her love.

BUD. But I don't like such proofs; she might, at any rate, have condescended to make me acquainted with her discontents, without first openly complaining to her mother. (*crosses R.*)

MRS. Q. (*aside.*) I see it won't do to press the subject too far at present.

Enter THOMAS, R. H.

THOMAS. (*whispers to BUD.*) Waiting for orders, sir; the preparations are quite at a stand still.

MRS. Q. (*aside.*) More secrets! What is all this mystery?

THOMAS. (*aloud.*) If you please, sir, you are wanted below.

BUD. Directly.

MRS. Q. Mr. Bud, you must pardon my complaining to you of the conduct of this servant of yours—really, the insolence with which they all treat me is too marked to be passed over in silence.

THOMAS. Why, lord! What can she mean? Who treats her with insolence?

BUD. What, sir! do you dare to—

THOMAS. I, sir! Lord bless my soul, I never dreamt of such a thing!

BUD. Take more care for the future, or I shall turn you off at a moment's warning.

THOMAS. But, sir—

BUD. I won't hear a word. (*to MRS. QUICKFIDGET.*) Excuse me for a moment—I shall return directly. (*aside.*) I'm sure I'm not in a state to make joyful preparations. A very pretty beginning I've made, and how it's to end I don't know

[*Exit R. H.*

THOMAS. (*as he retires.*) Confounded mother-in-law ! It's the first scolding I've had since I've been here, and all on her account. [*Exit R. H.*]

MRS. Q. I am more and more convinced that things are not as they should be. How fortunate was my arrival at this moment ; my presence may yet be able to check these irregularities. Ah, my poor children, it was high time you had me with you ! [*Exit R. H.*]

END OF ACT I.

SCENE.—*As before.*

ACT II.

FOOZLE, L. H., and WAVERLY, R. H. *discovered seated.*

FOOZLE. That good lady is raving mad. Now, would you believe that the whole of the disturbance just now arose from my merely declining to profit, at a minute's warning, of a most amiable suggestion of hers, that I should dislodge immediately ? I insist on remaining ; she flies in a fury, and I go to sleep. She thinks she's right ; perhaps she is—and I'm not wrong.

WAV. Bravo ! The matrimonial horizon grows cloudy. Egad, how lucky I didn't go too far with the widow ! It wouldn't have done. The lady has lost no time. Only arrived last night, and a dispute with you this morning ! Oh, poor Mr. Foozle !

FOOZLE. Oh, as for me, it's of no sort of consequence, nor does it annoy me in the least. What does it matter ?

WAV. I see it all plainly. Your presence gives her umbrage, as you are an obstacle in the way of her authority : a mother-in-law is a ticklish being. She must

“ Reign alone,
And cannot brook a rival near the throne.”

FOOZLE. She may reign with all my heart, so that she but leaves me in peace.

Enter BUD, R. II.

WAV. Come, most blissful son-in-law, and receive my congratulations.

BUD. What do you mean?

WAV. Mean! That I am charmed with the goodness of dear Mrs. Quickfidget; and, as to your uncle, Mr. Foozle, he's quite fascinated! Anxious for your peace of mind, she is—with that sweetness so peculiar to herself—about to turn him out of doors.

BUD. Turn uncle Foozle out of doors! (*crosses to c.*)

FOOZLE. What does it matter?

WAV. A mere trifle! It is but the dawning of those happy days in store for you. Get married, Ned, get married!

BUD. No, no, I must put a stop to all this in time. It is very amazing, though, that I cannot pass my Nelly's birthday without being bored by all this nonsense.

WAV. Oh, by-the-bye, are all your preparations made?

BUD. Everything is arranged.

WAV. So much the better. I must leave you for a short time. Poor Felix, I pity you, upon my soul! I thank my stars that I am still single; but if ever I *do* marry, such is my horror of a mother-in-law, that I shall certainly look out for an orphan. [*Exit R. II.*]

FOOZLE. Come, Felix, think no more of this trash; take my advice, get all in readiness, and leave Mrs. Quickfidget to amuse herself in her own way.

Enter MRS. FITZOSBORNE, L. II. BUD crosses to receive her.

MRS. F. Here I am, true to my promise; and lest a servant might unknowingly betray our secret, I have executed my commission myself. (MRS. QUICKFIDGET *opens the doors at the back, and starts at the sight of* MRS. FITZOSBORNE.)

MRS. Q. As I live! the widow here again!

MRS. F. You know how necessary mystery is in so delicate an affair.

MRS. Q. Heavens! What can it mean?

MRS. F. We must'nt give Ellen the slightest cause of suspicion.

BUD. Not for worlds.

MRS. Q. A mother's privilege must justify my listening here. (*retires within the doors.*)

MRS. F. (*gives the portrait.*) Receive, then, from my hand, this imperfect resemblance, and may it be a pledge of the sincerest, unalterable love.

MRS. Q. A very pretty avowal, upon my word.

FOOZLE. What a striking likeness!

MRS. Q. The old profligate!

BUD. How shall I ever repay such kindness? (*kisses her hand.*) Believe me, my love shall be as lasting as you can desire.

MRS. Q. A mutual declaration.

FOOZLE. This is delightful! My niece little dreams of what is going on. As for me, you know, I'm as silent as the grave; but take my advice, don't trust that mother-in-law of yours; that woman's tongue, like the dear departed Mrs. F's, never can be kept quiet.

MRS. Q. Ah! detestable old uncle!

FOOZLE. We had better separate, now, before we are surprised together by her argus eyes.

BUD. Don't forget the appointed hour.

MRS. Q. So! An assignation!

MRS. F. Never fear me. I'll be punctual to the rendezvous. I shall now make my escape lest Ellen should see me here, and suspects something.

BUD. Farewell, my dear friend, but for a little.

MRS. F. I long for the happy moment! Such stratagems against wives are quite delicious. [*Exit L.H.*]

MRS. Q. What a barefaced hussey!

BUD. Let us retire, too.

FOOZLE. When your wife knows it, eh? Ha, ha! It's rare! and how our gunpowder mamma will be surprised! Pooh! Squibs and crackers!

[*Exeunt FELIX and FOOZLE, R.H.*]

MRS. Q. (*coming forward.*) Good heavens! What treachery! My child—my child! What a dreadful plot! My son-in-law to be capable of this, and so soon

Villain! The widow, too! And that disgusting old uncle, at his age to connive at such a plot! But what's to be done? How can I save my Nelly from the dreadful abyss? Here comes the victim.

Enter ELLEN L. H.

(*Mrs. QUICKFIDGET takes her in her arms.*)

ELLEN. Bless me, mamma, what means this grief?

Mrs. Q. My poor Nelly, I shudder at your fate! How can I disguise my affliction at seeing you sacrificed, and so young, too! In all the bloom of youth to be betrayed! So sweet—so kind—so recently married!

ELLEN. Heavens! What can you mean?

Mrs. Q. Listen! and arm yourself, my dear Nelly, for the horrible disclosure, and when your husband has trampled his conjugal oaths under foot, do not, by your tears, furnish fresh triumphs to your insidious rival.

ELLEN. Oh, then Felix has—

Mrs. Q. Oh, yes, my darling, he has. I thought that whispering was not for nothing. My suspicions were roused—but now a minature has been given. Oh, these men! these husbands!

ELLEN. What do I hear! Felix unfaithful! Felix deceive me! Indeed I begin to see it but too clearly! I have observed him thoughtful and absent during the last two days, and he has scarcely been with me an instant. Alas! I could have borne anything but that Julia should have given the blow. It must have cost him many a pang before he could deceive me thus.

Mrs. Q. As for that detestable old Foozle! I shall never be able to contain myself with him! Bless me, here comes the execrable old viper! Let me go, my dear! If I remain, I must tear his eyes out, and I don't wish to do that yet. Come! [*Exit L. H.*]

ELLEN. I follow you! I feel my heart breaking! And but this morning I believed myself the happiest of women.

(*going L.*)

Enter FOOZLE, R. H.

FOOZLE. Nelly, Nelly—where are you going my pretty? What's the matter with her? Who is it running away from? Not from nunky Foozle, I hope?

ELLEN. Leave me, sir.

FOOZLE. Eh? Bless me! I leave you! Why, what have I done?

ELLEN. Ask your own heart, sir.

FOOZLE. Why, Nelly, you are joking, let me hear now.

ELLEN. I beg, sir, we may end this; I will myself retire.

FOOZLE. But—

ELLEN. Guilty as you are, if your heart is yet capable of remorse, it will be excited by the bitter reflection that my affection for you has been requited by this unmerited treachery.

FOOZLE. But, what do you mean?

ELLEN. Monster! Know that you have opened a wound which can never be healed. Perfidious man! I fly from your deadly aspect—wretched Ellen! what a fate attends you! [Exit L. H.]

FOOZLE. (*looking in the glass on the chimney-piece* L. 2 E.) My deadly aspect! Hebrew! Don't understand a word.

Enter BUD, R. H.

Oh, Felix, my boy, you are just in time to illuminate me. Do you see anything deadly in my aspect? What is the matter with your wife? She says I'm a treacherous monster! What in the name of wonder have I done?

BUD. What are you talking about?

FOOZLE. I tell you, I'm a perfidious man! Of a deadly aspect! I've opened incurable wounds, &c., &c.

BUD. Who says so?

FOOZLE. Your wife.

BUD. Impossible!

FOOZLE. So it is—and yet true.

BUD. Oh, this is perfect.

FOOZLE. I don't remember ever having betrayed any body, even in my sleep.

BUD. I'm sorry to say, I foresee some new crotchet of my beloved mother-in-law.

FOOZLE. I believe so, too. That good old lady has set her heart upon turning us all topsy turvy.

BUD. I must really put an end to it.

Enter THOMAS, L. H.

THOMAS. The company are arriving, sir.

BUD. I am coming directly to receive them.

MRS. QUICKFIDGET. (*without.*) No more insolence, sir! I won't bear it.

BUD. What's the matter now?

THOMAS. It's only Mrs. Quickfidget, sir: she has declared war against the whole house: and is flying about like a pea in a fire shovel. First it was me—then all the rest of the servants in turn. She has been asking all sorts of odd questions; has taken possession of the keys of all the closets, and threatens to turn us out of doors—It is as good as a play to hear her: the very neighbours are at their windows. Here she comes—she must have it out with master—I've had enough. (*runs off.*)

Enter MRS. QUICKFIDGET L. H.

MRS. Q. Pretty doings, upon my word; I never met with such a set: the idleness of one servant, and the insolence of another renders this house intolerable. Mr. Bud, allow me to say you are to blame when your servants dare to lose their respect for your mother-in-law.

BUD. Odds bobs!—there's no standing this! Permit me to ask how it is that discord and ill-humour have been introduced into my peaceful habitation: I am surprised, and you must own I have reason to inquire the cause; my respect prevents me from saying more.

MRS. Q. And permit me to say, I am no less astonished at the tone you adopt for the inquiry. Am I not trying to establish something like harmony and order around you?

BUD. My dear madam, you frighten me with your order and harmony; I infinitely prefer the old discords, if it's all the same to you.

MRS. Q. Then you defend the insolence of your servants?

BUD. No! I blame your over zeal. I dare say I am wrong, but I prefer my domestic quiet to anything else; I had it yesterday, and you can best inform me why I have it no longer.

FOOZLE. (R. C.) That was a home thrust.

MRS. Q. I understand you, sir, my presence displeases you.

BUD. I didn't say that.

MRS. Q. Perhaps you didn't mean it.

BUD. I only say, I like peace and tranquillity.

MRS. Q. And, for that reason, wish to be free from my presence; you don't answer. I can interpret your silence, and I am only sorry to find that the nephew is quite worthy of his perfidious uncle.

FOOZLE. There I figure in again. What does it matter?

MRS. Q. No! I will not abandon my poor child! I will stand boldly by her side, and I thank heaven that I am here in time to help her. Without my arrival a pretty happiness was prepared for my poor Nelly; but I am here, sir—here, to tear the mask from your face.

BUD. I don't understand you.

FOOZLE. Chaldaic!

BUD. Will you have the goodness to explain yourself?

Enter ELLEN, L. H.

MRS. Q. Come here, my child. Your kind husband has, in the clearest manner, threatened to turn me out of his house.

BUD. Who, I? I never said anything of the sort. Did I, uncle Foozle?

FOOZLE. What does it matter?

ELLEN. I entreat you, sir, not to add fresh outrage to the cruel and unmerited insults I am already compelled to bear: at least, do not offend the mother of a wife you have so soon deceived and betrayed.

BUD. Nelly! I deceived—I betray you! What do you say? Never! You know I wouldn't!

MRS. Q. Admirable! Deny your wickedness, sir! we were not foolish enough to expect sincerity from you: but learn, that not even the excessive prudence, and dexterity of our beloved uncle could conceal your baseness.

FOOZLE. I must always be lugged in.

BUD. She's mad!

MRS. Q. You, (*crosses.*) yes, you! more culpable than any—base, depraved old man!

FOOZLE. I?

MRS. Q. You! who under the deceitful appearance of innocence and imbecility, conceal, within you, a heart consumed by vice and iniquity. My son-in-law was kind and sincere, and adored his wife, till you dragged him into the infamous trap—designing hypocrite!

FOOZLE. Chinese—pure Chinese!

ELLEN. Calm yourself, dearest mother.

MRS. Q. Are you not ashamed, at your age? Fye! Blush for yourself!

FOOZLE. (*yawns.*) May I be told my crime, for really I cannot undertake to blush at a minute's warning, unless I know what for.

MRS. Q. Unexampled audacity! My poor child! At such a moment, too, to perpetrate the blow! On the very day of my arrival—on my Nelly's birthday!

BUD. There, that's all that was wanted to complete it.

ELLEN. My birthday?

MRS. Q. Yes, my dear, I repeat it. With tears in my eyes, I wish you many happy returns of the day.

FOOZLE. What a horrible wish?

Enter WAVERLY and Mrs. FITZOSBORNE, L. H.

WAV. Punctual to my promise, I bring you Mrs. Fitzosborne.

ELLEN. Julia! Oh, Heavens!

MRS. Q. Fly from that creature! Her baleful presence, I see, afflicts you. Come with your fond mother. (*crosses to R. H.*) Let us fly this nest of vipers! Triumph—ay, triumph, demoniac uncle! It will be short—come!

[*Exit with ELLEN, R. H.*

BUD. What am I to think of all this? I must follow them and get it explained. Excuse me for a moment—unhappy Felix that I am!

[*Exit R. H.*

(*all seem amazed.*

WAV. Infelix Felix!

MRS. F. Pray what has happened?

WAV. Haven't a notion. Will Mr. Foozle explain?

FOOZLE. I? I never could decypher hieroglyphics.

WAV. I'll lay a wager this new rumpus is all the work of Mrs. Quickfidget.

FOOZLE. You've hit it.

WAV. Oh, I recognise her handy work everywhere. She might have waited till to-morrow, and not let her maternal affection knock up our festivities.

Mrs. F. But, Ellen—why was she in such affliction? This morning I left her so happy. What a sudden change!

WAV. Marriage secrets—conjugal freemasonry!

Mrs. F. Well, as I think a third person by no means acceptable, I shall take my departure until Mrs. Quickfidget's fire be extinguished.

FOOZLE. (L. H.) Bless me! It's six o'clock! I must go to dinner.

Mrs. F. How, Mr. Foozle, can you think of dinner at such a moment?

FOOZLE. Why, madam, you see I am a methodical old fellow. Let them laugh or cry, quarrel or kiss, it never alters my dinner hour—my health would suffer. So, if you please to accept my arm, I'll accompany you, on your way out, as far as the dining room door. (*going R.*)

Mrs. F. Ha! ha! what a philosopher! I wonder Mrs. Quickfidget's attacks upon you haven't taken away your appetite.

FOOZLE. Gnat bites, my dear! Attacks, indeed! You should have seen the attacks of my late wife, the dear departed Mrs. F.—Pooh! fire and fiddlestrings!

[*Exit with Mrs. FITZOSBORNE, R. H.*]

WAV. Single wretchedness! I love to see their little bickerings—they reconcile me. I wish I hadn't been so tender, now, to the widow, on the way here. I see it won't do. No, no, I'll keep well while I am so.—But what's to be done with this poor devil, Felix? I must lend him a helping hand. There's only one way, and that is to turn out the old lady. But how to do it? It's a ticklish business. At the very first hint she'll fly into the air like a sky rocket.

Enter THOMAS, R. H.

Well, Thomas, how are they going on?

THOMAS. Oh, worse and worse, sir. Just as the com-

pany were all assembled in the drawing room, the door bursts open—in flounces old missus in a fury, and young missus in tears; and, without so much as how d'ye do to anybody, in they rush into young missus's room, and double lock the door.

WAV. What, before all the guests?

THOMAS. Yes, sir; and you may suppose what followed. First they whispered, then murmured, and, at last, dropped off, one by one, home again.

WAV. Hang it, though! It begins to grow serious—well?

THOMAS. Well, after that, in rushes master like a madman, and almost batters the door down—but all in vain. No answer—all silent as death: and there I left him, pacing up and down like a cat round a rat trap.

WAV. Charming! And poor dear uncle Foozle?

THOMAS. Oh, he's quietly seated in the dining room; where, out of the reach of the noise, he is peaceably eating his part of a grand dinner, at the head of a large table laid out for sixteen.

WAV. I must break in upon his repast. Do you go in search of Mrs. Quickfidget, and tell her that Mr. Foozle wishes to speak to her, and I'll warrant that the pleasure of attacking him will bring her out of her hiding place.

THOMAS. That's certain, for her anger is chiefly against poor Mr. Foozle.

WAV. So much the better. While he, sad victim, is bearing the brunt of her anger, then do you conduct Mrs. Bud to me: but, first of all, send your master here. I must positively put an end to this altercation.

THOMAS. I'll do it, sir; but, take my word for it, no peace can long be kept here till missus's mother quits the house. [Exit R. II.]

WAV. Thomas is right; poor Bud and his wife cannot hope for any happiness till that desired end is accomplished.

Enter BUD, R. II.

Well, Felix, what news do you bring? Is your wife still implacable?

BUD. Yes,

WAV. But why?

BUD. I tell you that's what I want to know myself. I shall go distracted!

WAV. Calm yourself.

BUD. That's very easy to say; but I can't after such an affront as this to me and all my friends.—Its intolerable!

WAV. It's all your amiable mother-in-law.

BUD. I believe so. But Nelly is quite as much to blame in my eyes. Does not she know how I doat on her? Then what business has she to believe whatever it is they have told her? Besides, I ought to be made acquainted with my crime. A frantic mother separates me from my wife, and why? I am a guilty wretch—accused—judged—and run away from, and I don't know what for! Oh, here comes my wife. (*goes up.*)

Enter ELLEN, R. H. WAVERLY crosses to receive her.

ELLEN. You sent for me. Mr. Waverly? But, excuse me, I thought to find you alone. (*going.*)

WAV. Let me entreat of you to stay.

ELLEN. No, let me fly his presence.

WAV. Only listen first, and fly afterwards.

ELLEN. Well, sir, I consent; but mind, only at your request.

WAV. Well then, I wish, as a sincere friend, to put an end to this contention. Pray, be kind enough to state its cause; nor think me impertinent, since it is for your mutual benefit that I speak.

ELLEN. Oh, the gentleman has doubtless already informed you.

WAV. On the contrary, the gentleman knows nothing.

BUD. Certainly not. (*comes down R. H.*)

ELLEN. This is a fresh outrage; you cannot be ignorant of what you have done to merit this.

WAV. But, at all events, I know nothing, and if you speak so enigmatically I fear I never shall.

BUD. I guess the hand that deals the blow; Mrs. Quickfidget is the enemy that conducted the attack.

ELLEN. At least respect my mother; she has, indeed, illuminated your conduct, and to her I owe the knowledge of your altered affections. She has opened my eyes, and

the light of truth has broken in. It has cost me much to believe you culpable; but both love and friendship have united to betray me. Could I suspect it! but I now know all; and the gift, to-day received by you—the portrait given as a pledge of tender, requited affection, is but too clear an evidence of your inconstancy.

BUD. What! What do you say?

ELLEN. I repeat that, in this very room you received a portrait from the hands of Julia Fitzosborne.

BUD. That's true enough, I confess.

ELLEN. Well, sir?

BUD. Well! But not her portrait; it was mine!

ELLEN. Yours!

BUD. Painted by Julia as your birthday present; and who, had it not been for the dreadful storm raised by your worthy mother, would have presented it to you herself.

ELLEN. Mr. Waverley, dare I believe what he says?

BUD. No, no! Don't believe me. Look! (*shows portrait.*)

ELLEN. My poor ill-used Felix. (*embrace.*)

WAV. Now that must be very pleasant, though! I believe I shall marry the widow.

BUD. My own duck!

Enter THOMAS, R. H.

THOMAS. If you please, sir—

BUD. Well, Thomas, what's the matter with you?

THOMAS. If you please, sir, I'm very sorry—but, with all respect and attachment, I am come to give you warning.

BUD. An odd mode of showing your attachment, Thomas.

THOMAS. Yes, sir; but there is such a noise and hubbub now in your house, that my nerves won't bear it no longer. That 'ere Mrs. Quickfidget, saving your presence—

BUD. Here's another!

THOMAS. I've lived so many years in this house in your confidence, and well treated, that I can't get used to this sudden ranting and tearing about, and bandying of hard words; but, howsomever, it ain't only me, for the other servants gets worse off. (*beckons off.*)

Enter COOK, HOUSEMAID, and FOOTMAN.

There's nothing but insolent rogue, brute, and sich like words a flying about in the air; so that we are all come to ax for our discharges.

COOK. We wants to go.

BUD. There, that will do—that will do: we'll talk about it by-and-bye.

COOK. Thank you, sir.

THOMAS. I assure you we wouldn't have said nothing if there'd been any getting on; but there isn't, by no means whatsomdever. *[Exeunt SERVANTS, R. H.]*

BUD. This house is turned topsy-turvy since last night.

WAV. My dear Felix, I would not be harsh—but what could you expect? The sort of thing never did succeed yet, I tell you, and never will. Reason illuminates you, and suggests a remedy.

BUD. But the remedy, Ned?

WAV. Get rid of the cause, and the effect will cease.

BUD. Egad! I believe you are right. I see, my dear Nelly, this afflicts you; but how can we restore peace otherwise?

Enter FOOZLE, R. H.

WAV. Well, Mr. Foozle, whence come you?

FOOZLE. From the dinner table. Mrs. Quickfidget, in order to enrage me, has just been acting another of her terrifying scenes. That lady's an earthquake—a positive mount Vesuvius! She'll explode some day, and blow the roof off.

BUD. We must at least manage it so that she shall take a voluntary departure.

WAV. Oh, without doubt. You must begin quietly, and, by degrees, make her yield to the proposition—but who's to undertake it?

ELLEN. I could not think of hurting poor dear mamma's feelings.

BUD. Nor I, certainly.

WAV. I oughtn't to be mixed up in it. Besides, I'm not one of the family—then what is to be done?

FOOZLE. *(starting up.)* I'm the man! *I'll* do it!

BUD. *You*, uncle Foozle! Do you feel yourself capable of sustaining the first shock of her anger?

FOOZLE. I'm not afraid of a woman's tongue, as the late lamented Mrs. F. could attest if she were here, which, thank Heaven, she is not.

WAV. No one can be more fitted to the task: as Felix's uncle, he is not a stranger, and his title gives great weight on similar occasions, reducing it to a mere treaty between rival powers.

FOOZLE. Well, here I am—ready. (*buttons up his coat.*)

BUD. Dear uncle Foozle, how obliged we shall be.

ELLEN. But now, pray, speak kindly to her.

BUD. Yes, tell her as kindly as you can to—

FOOZLE. I understand.—To—(*motions going, with his hand.*) Leave it to me. I know how these things should be done. She gave me a lesson herself this morning.

WAV. Egad! here she comes—just in time.

ELLEN. I shall tremble.

BUD. I shall run. Now, uncle, firm!

FOOZLE. As a rock.

ELLEN. Felix, take me with you. Uncle, be gentle.

FOOZLE. As a dove.

WAV. Courageous.

FOOZLE. As a lion. (*all escape L. but FOOZLE.*)

Enter MRS. QUICKFIDGET, R H.

MRS. Q. What's the meaning of all this? Does my daughter and her husband fly at the sight of me?

FOOZLE. Excuse me, I have something to say to you.

MRS. Q. You!

FOOZLE. I!

MRS. Q. Let me hear it then.

FOOZLE. I have been charged—

MRS. Q. With what?

FOOZLE. That is, to propose—always provided it suits you—

MRS. Q. In short—

FOOZLE. Don't get angry! Mine is a cool temperament.

MRS. Q. And mine a warm one.

FOOZLE. I have noticed that it was so. Well, then—

MRS. Q. What—what?

FOOZLE. Well then.—I'll give her a touch in her own style.—Have you never reflected, at any time, on the unpleasant consequences which might, one day or other, result from the inconsiderate presence and sojourn of a third person, even though a relation, in the family of a newly-married couple?

MRS. Q. Sir!

FOOZLE. You know there are situations in all families where such an eternal intruder cannot but be disagreeable. You understand—conjugal dissensions, &c., &c.

MRS. Q. In short, you mean to suggest—

FOOZLE. That you will be kind enough to quit this house as soon as possible.—It's out!

MRS. Q. And do you dare—

FOOZLE. I beg your pardon! Let's talk it over calmly and dispassionately. You have a habit of scolding and storming, and attacking people—not that I mind it! don't run away with the idea that it matters to me—no, bless you! I have been long accustomed to the sort of thing with the late lamented Mrs. F. I can laugh at everything; but then, you see, all haven't had my good fortune, and so—your children—they would take it as a great favour if you would—(*motions with his hand.*)

MRS. Q. And so, uncle Foozle wishes to turn me out of doors?

FOOZLE. I! Bless you! I never should have dreamt of such a thing: what can it matter to me? The young folks proposed it themselves.

MRS. And do you think me so dull as not to guess from whom this perfidious advice emanated? Here I remain in spite of you.

FOOZLE. You remain! Good—Its all the same to me, my message is finished, and I wash my hands of the rest.

Enter WAVERLY, L. H

WAV. Well, Mr. Foozle.

FOOZLE. She won't go.

WAV. Then it's all over with us.

MRS. Q. Pray, Mr. Waverly, are you aware, that this elegant old gentleman has been charged to present me with an insolent dismissal from the house? He has been

polite enough to tell me that my children hate the sight of me. This is the recompence of maternal affection. For this did I refuse the proffered hand of my cousin Weazel.

WAV. You, madam?

MRS. A. I, sir! The sweetest-tempered creature! Who would have confided himself, and all the possessed into my keeping.

FOOZLE. Lord! Why he was the very man for her.

MRS. Q. Ay! And a man of immense wealth, too!—who's fortune would one day have been mine! So, you see, it is not everywhere that I am so unwelcome.

WAV. An idea strikes me! And why not accept an offer fraught with so many advantages?

MRS. Q. Ah! Mr. Waverly! You little know a mother's heart! I sacrificed all to be near my children.

WAV. Such a husband would be a treasure for you. And could you not renew the treaty?

MRS. Q. At a moment's warning, if I pleased.

WAV. Really!

MRS. Q. Certainly!

WAV. Now, listen to me. Your children have insulted you—have had even the audacity to dismiss you their house; revenge yourself, and punish them.

MRS. Q. But how?

WAV. Abandon them to their fate.

MRS. Q. What, sir?

WAV. But, in casting them off, prove at the same time, that a mother's love is not destroyed even by anger: this marriage with your cousin Weasel will ultimately secure to them the property which would otherwise fall into the hands of his servants. Weigh these advantages well; you enrich your children, revenge your wrongs, and render an old man who doats on you happy for life.

FOOZLE. Poor old cousin Weasel! What harm can he have done to Ned Waverly to merit this?

WAV. Do you hesitate? Show your decision, and, sooner or later, your children will implore your forgiveness.

MRS. Q. I hope so. Yes—this shall be my revenge.

Enter MR. and MRS. BUD, L. II.

BUD. (*to FOOZLE.*) Go, or stop?

MRS. Q. Ah! What, anxious to know whether your affectionate proposition is accepted or no? Well, don't be alarmed—I go! I bid you farewell—but learn that I leave you to become a bride.

BUD. A bride! Whose?

FOOZLE. Not mine!

MRS. Q. Since my children dare to treat their mother as a stranger, I give my hand to my cousin Weasel. I leave you to-morrow.

FOOZLE. Ah!

MRS. Q. But I shall return.

FOOZLE. Oh, lord!

MRS. Q. Yes, I shall return to provoke you, and bring my husband with me, that you may witness his happiness, and die of envy. Ah, if you had taken my advice—

ELLEN. Nay, dearest mother, do not tear my heart more cruelly than the idea of losing you has already done. Leave us not in anger, but believe that your children still love you dearly.

MRS. Q. Ah! my heart is too fond of you to quit you in anger. Embrace me, my children. (*embraces FELIX.*) I confide my child to you—she's an angel. (*embraces ELLEN.*) Keep your eyes open my dear, and, above all, beware of jealousy. Adieu! I go to make my cousin happy.

(*FOOZLE opens his arms to embrace her; she repulses him and exit.*)

FOOZLE. What does it matter? Poor cousin Weasel! We shall have her back again, a widow, in less than a month.

BUD. (*embracing ELLEN.*) My dear Nelly!

FOOZLE. (*embracing WAVERLY.*) My dear Ned!

WAV. Egad, if the widow were here now, I couldn't resist.

MRS. FITZOSBORNE. (*peeping in L.*) Is the fire put out? Upon my word, pretty doings!

WAV. My dear Mrs. Fitzosborne, is your mother alive?

MRS. F. Mine! No! What an odd question!

WAV. (*falling at her feet.*) Then take pity on your victim.

MRS. F. The man's mad!

WAV. For love!

MRS. F. Get up, Mr. Waverly, I beg.

WAV. Not till you pronounce my doom.

MRS. F. What, in public? Well, I'll think about it.

WAV. Will you? Then I am a married man after all.

BUD. Why, uncle Foozle, we shall have you getting another wife next.

FOOZLE. Don't be alarmed! My remembrance of the late lamented Mrs. F. is too vivid for that. I thought my happiness with her was perfect; but I find I wanted one thing to complete it—a mother-in-law! Let this day's experience be a lesson to all. Children, love and venerate your parents: filial duty and affection are the best guarantees for conjugal happiness. But believe me—now I mean it in kindness, for what does it matter to me?—it is a dangerous experiment to unite two families, so nearly related, under one roof. The circumspection exacted is of too refined a nature, so delicate the tact required, that the trial cannot be hazarded without endangering either your own prerogative, your affection for your wife, or your respect for your wife's mother!

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